

## LET'S NOT FORGET OUR LARGE HOMELESS BROTHERS AND SISTERS

by Noelle Sewell (PA)

The temperature is dropping, the leaves have fallen, and the sun is setting earlier, all sure signs of winter. Another sign of winter, although not as pleasant, is seeing people sleeping in public buildings or out in the cold on the streets of cities.

Who are these "street people"? They are people who may have lost their jobs or living quarters. Many of them are mentally ill patients who were released due to federal or state budgets cuts. Some are entire families with small children who have special needs. Some of them are women from all walks of life who are fleeing abusive partners. Any of us could fall victim to these situations.

For the last few years many cities have spent millions of dollars trying to provide shelter, food, medical care, and vocational training for the homeless. Some programs have totally failed while other programs have started to succeed only to run out of money. Because many of the homeless have become fed up with the shelter system, they have formed their own advocacy groups. In Philadelphia there is one such group that is trying to change how the homeless are perceived by society.

A representative from the Philadelphia Committee for Dignity for the Homeless stated that there is one type of homeless person that is very seldom seen on the streets: the homeless person who is fat. There is no data available on the number of large homeless people nationwide, but in Philadelphia it has been estimated that at least 2% of the homeless are full-figured.

This small population of homeless presents special problems. Many of these homeless, especially women, have problems getting clothing. Although many shelters receive donations of clothing, the size ranges are very limited. Sleeping arrangements may also be a problem due to the fact that cots used in shelters are often too small or not sturdy enough to hold a larger person.

I have been working in shelters for almost five years. I have seen how fat, homeless people are sometimes treated differently. Often many of the physicians, therapists, social workers, and shelter employees make these people feel that if they lost weight, some of their emotional problems would disappear. This is simply not true.

When fat homeless people enter a shelter, the first thing they may

hear is "you need to lose weight" or "are you going to go on a diet?" Instead of criticism, these people should be shown more compassion and understanding for their situations.

Since one of the goals of NAAFA is to fight for the rights of the fat population, we must be aware of the problems faced by homeless people. If you want to donate clothing, shoes, or personal hygiene items, call your local welfare or human services office. You can also look for church or civic organizations who work with the homeless listed in your local phone directory. ★

## 1988 CONVENTION SITE ANNOUNCED

A proposal to hold the 1988 convention in Baltimore, Maryland has been approved by the Board of Directors. The convention bid, presented by Roz Thomas, Peggy Williams, and Nellie Hensley, is for a Labor Day weekend convention to be held at the Baltimore Marriott Inner Harbor hotel.

The Marriott is adjacent to Harborplace—a three acre area that includes boutiques, restaurants, the National Aquarium, the Maryland Science Center/Davis Planetarium, the U.S. Frigate Constellation and all the sights and sounds of the Baltimore harbor.

While final plans have not yet been made, convention events will begin on Wednesday, August 31 and conclude on Labor Day, September 5, 1988. The most convenient airport to the hotel is Baltimore/Washington International.

Anyone wishing to volunteer to give a workshop at the convention should write the Convention Steering Committee in care of the NAAFA office, describing their credentials and proposed workshop. ★

*Seasons Greetings!*  
*from NAAFA*

## BOARD ELECTS OFFICERS

The election of national officers was held at the November 28 Board of Directors meeting held in Columbia, Maryland.

Conrad H. Blickenstorfer, Ph.D. was elected by acclaim to a second term as Chairman of the Board. Nancy Summer was elected President, (succeeding Eileen M. Lefebure). Paula Dachis was elected to her second term as Vice-President. Robert H. Bain was elected to the office of Treasurer, (replacing Nancy Summer). And elected for her second term was Recording Secretary Mary-Jane Grace-Brown.

National officers are elected to one year terms by the members of the Board of Directors, who are elected by the general membership. ✱

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## NOMINEES FOR 1988 BOARD ELECTION ANNOUNCED

The 1988 Election Committee met on November 28 to discuss possible election rules changes and to nominate candidates for the 1988 election. As announced in the last Newsletter, members wishing to be considered for nomination were asked to write to the committee. Three such letters were received.

The NAAFans who were nominated are:

Deborah Albright (OR)	Lynn McAfee (PA)
Jerilynn Carmichael (OH)	Victoria Reed (CT)
Paula Dachis (MD)	Susan Tenzer (PA)
Mary-Jane Grace-Brown (NJ)	Peggy Ventura (NJ)
Jerry Hoxworth (OH)	Linda Ward (PA)
Aglaia Koras-Bain (NJ)	Neal Zimmerman (CT)

The election winners will be filling four seats on the Board of Directors: three seats with terms of three years each, plus a fourth seat with a one year term (recently opened by Eileen M. Lefebure's resignation from the Board). Since the twelve nominees are still in the process of being notified, it is not yet known how many candidates will choose to run.

There is also a procedure for nomination by petition. Those NAAFans who are interested in running for the Board by petition, and who have been a member of NAAFA for more than one year, are advised to call the NAAFA office to request a copy of the election rules.

Two changes to the election rules were approved by the Board at the November 28th meeting. The first relaxes the rule which required 100 signatures on a valid petition, to 75 signatures required this year. The second sets the date February 1, 1988 as the deadline by which nominees must accept or decline their nominations, and by which petitions of candidacy must be received by the Election Committee.

The Election Committee is made up those Board members whose terms are not expiring this year. Conrad H. Blickenstorfer was elected by the committee to serve as election chairman. Other committee members include Robert H. Bain, Neil Dachis, William J. Fabrey, and Nancy Summer.

According to Conrad Blickenstorfer, additional election rules changes are being considered and will be presented to the Board for approval in January. ✱

## AREA FACILITATORS NEEDED FOR NEW PROGRAM

by Robert Hartenstine (NY)

Do you live in an area without a chapter? Have you been a member of NAAFA for more than one year? Do you feel liberated about your own and other people's weights? Would you like to reach out and form links with other NAAFans in your area? If your answer is "yes", then you may want to be part of the Area Facilitators program.

The purpose of this program is to facilitate the networking of members who live in areas not currently served by a chapter. It works as follows: A Board-approved member from such an area will be selected as an Area Facilitator. All members in that area will receive the name and phone number of this Area Facilitator. The job of the "AF" will be to ascertain the need and desires of the members who contact him or her. Some will want information and support; others will want to be put in contact with other members so they can organize social or activist activities. It all depends on what the members want.

The number of contacts will depend on the membership density and level of local interest. Some of these networks will become chapters and others may never do so; but will, nonetheless, be very active as some non-chapter areas already are.

If you feel you have the time and interest to become an Area Facilitator, please contact me, Bob Hartenstine, Area Facilitators Committee Chairperson, c/o NAAFA, PO Box 43, Bellerose, NY 11426. I'll send you more information, including rules and qualifications. Help NAAFA grow, and be part of its future. I hope to hear from you soon. ✱

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## STRAW POLL

Last month we debuted the NAAFA Straw Poll—a chance for you to express your opinion on a wide range of topics.

The responses to our first straw poll—on a "doctor's kit" are still coming in. We'll report the results of that poll in our next issue.

This month we're curious what you think about personal ads in our Newsletter. Just how suggestive or explicit should they be? Are there any types of ads that we should refuse to print?

Your straw poll form is located on the bottom of the Ad Supplement enclosed with this issue. Express your opinion by mailing it today. ✱

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### NEWSLETTER STAFF

MANAGING EDITOR:	Nancy Summer
ACTIVISM EDITOR:	Peggy Williams
HEALTH EDITOR:	Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D.
SUPPORT EDITOR:	June Bailey
MEDIA EDITOR:	William J. Fabrey

## MEMBERSHIP GROWTH IN 1988

by Nancy Summer, Managing Editor

Having worked closely with NAAFA's finances during the last five years, I can tell you what other NAAFA "financial people" can tell you: NAAFA has become just too dependent on fundraising and convention revenues. While our total income has risen each year, the percentage of the total derived from dues gets smaller. I think it's also a fair statement to say that everyone wants NAAFA's membership rolls to grow (and there are many benefits of such growth beyond the obvious financial ones.)

I'm optimistic that in 1988 we'll see some success in this area. There are several exciting plans, programs, and ideas that are in the works that may have a real impact.

The first is Chairman Conrad Blickenstorfer's goal to find the funding to hire an Executive Director. Hiring an Executive Director is a wonderful idea. NAAFA is fortunate to have many dedicated, competent volunteers, but volunteers can only do so much. After meeting the demands of earning a living, and caring for home and family, volunteers only have so much time left for NAAFA. We need a paid professional whose vocation is NAAFA's development and management.

A second exciting development is the new Marketing and Advertising Committee. This new committee's immediate goals are to revamp NAAFA literature, design new promotional materials, and to begin promotional and advertising campaigns during the early months of 1988. Jim Brown and Randy Hertz Suriano (both of New Jersey) were appointed to co-chair this committee, and several other NAAFAs such as Steve Bell (NY) and Bob Bain (NJ) will be working on marketing strategies.

The Area Facilitators Committee (the subject of an article elsewhere in this issue) is also an exciting development. Robert Hartenstine (NY) has already completed the structuring of the program and is ready to hear from volunteers willing to bring NAAFA to the front lines of their own home towns, cities and states. We urge you to contact Bob if you are interested in being part of this grassroots development program.

And finally, our Local Chapters Committee has expanded its leadership. Aglaia Koras-Bain (NJ) was recently appointed to Co-Chair the committee along with Ruby Greenwald (NY). Ruby will continue to offer support and advice to chapters with specific problems. Aglaia will be handling the administrative functions of the committee plus creating materials to help local chapter leaders bring in new members and develop their chapters.

I'm excited about these new volunteer efforts. I think that they have the potential of making a positive impact on our membership rolls. But none of them preclude the need for an Executive Director.

Chairman Blickenstorfer has already received several letters from members offering suggestions and support in his project of getting the funds to hire an Executive Director. I urge others to offer their help and comments. ✪

Articles in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official policies of NAAFA, Inc., unless specifically noted. Please contact the NAAFA office about specific NAAFA policies. Commentaries in this Newsletter, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by a member of the editorial staff.

## NAAFA AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

by Sally Smith (CA)

As members of NAAFA, we wear several different hats: we are educators, social directors, medical advisors, activists, and public relations representatives. All of these roles are vitally important in the struggle against "lookism." The work that NAAFA has undertaken thus far has been integral in setting the groundwork for fat acceptance in society.

However, to be brutally honest, the power to change our condition does not lie in the Donahue or Winfrey shows, in dances and conventions, or in writing letters to manufacturers. While all of these activities are important, we can talk until we're blue in the face, yet we still will be discriminated against in employment, education, and access to adequate medical care. As an organization, we must recognize that our ability to change these realities lies in the political process: We must modify the laws in this country in order to guarantee our constitutional rights. NAAFA can no longer be reactive in its approach; rather, we must begin to be proactive. The time has come for NAAFA to take the offensive and make establishing the legal status of fat people an organizational priority.

There are two possible approaches to guaranteeing our constitutional rights as citizens of the United States: litigation and legislation.

Attempting to establish our legal status through litigation is a hit or miss proposition. First, a proper plaintiff must be found, and proper arguments must be used. Second, a court ruling is applicable in only one jurisdiction. Even if a case goes to the Supreme Court, and the Court rules in our favor, the ruling would only cover the exact facts of the case. If any details were to change with another plaintiff, the issue would have to be relitigated. Third, several years can pass between the time a lawsuit is filed and the appellate process is exhausted. Fourth, the political climate in the country must be taken into consideration. President Reagan has had the opportunity to appoint many conservative justices to the federal bench. Conservative governors of several states have also appointed judges who are hostile to expanding the civil rights of disenfranchised groups.

This is not to say that those individuals attempting to gain relief through the courts should be discouraged from doing so; rather, this approach is not the most productive way to use NAAFA's resources as an organization.

The other possibility, which I believe is more viable, is to put our energies into legislation. This has many advantages over seeking redress through the courts. The legislative process takes less time, costs less money, and statutes are not likely to be challenged in court. Many public interest organizations have begun to seek change through statutory law because they have found that while the courts are more hostile to civil rights cases, legislators are increasingly sympathetic. In addition, statutes have broader applications than caselaw, and therefore do not usually need to be amended. Lastly, the legislative process can involve an entire organization, by incorporating grassroots lobbying. This type of involvement not only serves to educate the public and our elected officials, but also brings NAAFA a more politically sophisticated membership.

We cannot delude ourselves into thinking that someone else will do this work for us: We must take the initiative in the war against "lookism". Until we establish our rights legally, we will be forever fighting a battle of "two steps forward, one step back." We have a valuable resource to help us in this goal: our membership. Together, we can end the discrimination against fat people. Separately, the most we can hope for is to educate a few, and remain disenfranchised as a group. If we can enact laws that guarantee fat people the rights afforded us by the Constitution, we will have a major battle behind us, and be able to concentrate on other important work. ✦

**EDITORS NOTE:** If you would like to respond to Sally's comments, or express your own viewpoint on the direction NAAFA should take in the future, please write us.

## JOHN FIELD, PIANIST AND COMPOSER

by Aglaia Koras-Bain (NJ)

Did you know that one of the most important pianist and innovative composers prior to the romantics of the early 1800's was a fat man named John Field? Although his "Nocturnes" actually anticipated Frederic Chopin's "Nocturnes," Field's compositions have remained tragically unclaimed by the general public.

Born in Dublin in 1782, Field's first teacher was his father, a violinist. The young Field began giving concerts at the age of six and soon was sent to the great pianist of the day, Muzio Clementi. Field's father paid Clementi one hundred guineas to accept the boy as a pupil; however, Clementi's treatment of his young student left much to be desired. One of Clementi's contemporaries, violinist Ludwig Spohr, wrote:

"...I sometimes accompanied Clementi to his large pianoforte warehouse, where Field was often obliged to play for hours to display the instruments to the best advantage for the purchasers. Field was kept on a very short allowance and was obliged to pay with many privations for the good fortune of having Clementi's instruction. I still have in recollection the figure of this pale, overgrown youth. When Field, who had outgrown his clothes, placed himself at the piano, stretched his arms over the keyboard so his sleeves shrunk up nearly to his elbows, his whole figure appeared awkward and stiff. People laughed when he sat down to play, but as soon as he touched the keys there was technical perfection and melancholy dreaming beyond compare."

Spohr was not the first to praise Field's abilities. Clementi called Field his favorite pupil, and the Russian composer, Glinka, described Field's touch as being like "great drops of rain, pouring over the keys as pearls on velvet."

It was clear that Field possessed great talent as a performer. Why, then, didn't he become more popular? Perhaps the main reason he didn't was that during that time, the fashionable "sex idol" of the day was the slender, impeccably-groomed, flamboyant, conventionally-handsome pianist, Franz Liszt. When Liszt sat down to play, ladies threw their clothes and jewels on the stage before he even touched a note. They screamed with ecstasy and even fainted before him. They fought madly over the gloves he left behind after his concerts, and one woman carried one of Liszt's cigarette butts in the crease of her bosom until the day she died! So it was no wonder that

Field, who was called "awkwardly corpulent, pale, and poorly-dressed," didn't stand a chance.

Although Liszt describes Field as having "no showmanship," he praised his compositions. Liszt wrote: "Field was the first to introduce a style in no way derived from the established categories, and in which feeling and melody, freed from the trammels of coercive form, reigned supreme. He opened the way for all the productions which have since appeared under the titles of nocturnes, impromptus, ballades, songs without words, etc. and to him we may trace the origins of pieces designed to portray subjective and profound emotion..."

It's tragic that even though Field possessed profound interpretive vision, he was limited by what his peers called an "uncharismatic" image and was therefore forced into the musical background. Rightfully frustrated and angered by the unfairness of his plight, it's not surprising that he has been called "a secretive, uncommunicative person who, Falstaffian in appearance, suffered from a lifelong inferiority complex."

Field achieved a degree of success later in Russia, but it's disturbing to find that many writers amplify what they call his "eccentricities" during that time period ("excessive fondness of food and drink and scandalous love affairs,") and virtually ignore his success.

During his last years, many sources tell of his increasing apathy and immobility as he grew older. Liszt wrote, "During the last part of his life, complete indifference took possession of him, influencing his personal habits. To rise, to sit down again, to walk was fatiguing to him. A light cane was at times too heavy a burden for his indolent hand, and if he let it drop from a sheer lack of energy to hold it, he would remain standing beside it until some passerby picked it up for him."

Although his death is usually attributed to "gluttony and alcoholism," I think Field probably died of a broken spirit. A lifetime of persecution over one's size can certainly "weigh heavily" on anyone's emotional and physical health.

Unfortunately, we cannot tell John Field that he really is appreciated by musicians who know about his work. Perhaps the best tribute would be to play his compositions. Just the other day, I played though some of his pieces again. I was deeply moved. Field's works truly did anticipate the compositions of Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. There is sadness in his pieces but never maudlin sentimentality. His music is always noble. ✦

### —OBITUARY—

#### SHARON WACHTEL

We regret to note the passing of Sharon Wachtel of Queens, New York. She was 38 years old when cancer took her life in October.

Sharon had been a member of NAAFA since 1973 and had been a volunteer in the old New York Chapter helping to organize chapter events. More recently, she was an active member of the Queens and Long Island chapters. She is survived by her husband Ken Wachtel.